

CASE STUDY: WALTER (Caucasian male)

Italicized type indicates the narrator; plain type indicates comments from various listeners. Names have been changed to protect the girl.

AS THE STORY WOULD BE TOLD IN POVERTY ... PROBABLY BY A RELATIVE OR NEIGHBOR:

Well, you know Walter got put away for 37 years. Him being 48 and all. He'll probably die in jail. Just couldn't leave his hands off that 12-year-old Susie.

Dirty old man. Bodding's gonna whup his tail.

Already did. You know Bodding was waiting for him in jail and beat the living daylight out of him.

In jail?

Yeah, Bodding got caught for possession. Had \$12,000 on him when they arrested him.

Golly, wish I had been there to cash in!!!! (laughter) A man's gotta make a living!

Susie being blind and all- I can see why Bodding beat the daylight out of Walter. Lucky he didn't get killed, old Walter is.

Too bad her mamma is no good.

She started the whole thing! Susie's mamma goes over there and argues with Bodding.

Ain't they divorced?

Yeah, and she's got Walter working for her, repairing her house or something.

Or something, I bet. What's she got in her house that's worth fixing?

Anyway, she goes over to Bodding's house to take the lawn mower ...

I reckon so as Walter can mow the yard?? I bet that's the first time old Walter has ever broken a sweat!

Reminds me of the time I saw Walter thinking about taking a job. All that thinking and he had to get drunk. He went to jail that time, too-a felony, I think it was. So many of those DWIs. Judge told him he was egregious.

Walter said he wasn't greasy-he took a bath last week!!! (laughter)

Bodding and Susie's mamma got in a fight, so she tells Walter to take Susie with him.

Lordy, her elevator must not go all the way to the top!! Didn't she know about him getting arrested for enticing a minor???

With Susie blind and all. And she sends Susie with Walter?

She sure don't care about her babies.

Well, Walter's mamma was there 'cause Walter lives with his mamma, seeing as how he can't keep no job.

Ain't his other brother there?

Yeah, and him 41 years old. That poor mamma sure has her burdens to bear. And then her yo-vear-old daughter, Susie's mamma, at home, too. You know Susie's mamma lost custody of her kids. Walter gets these videos, you know. Those adult videos. Heavy breathing! (laughter)

Some of them are more fun to listen to than look at! (laughter) Those people in the videos are des-per-ate!!

Anyway, he puts those on and then carries Susie to his room and tells her she wants him-and describes all his sex-u-al exploits!!

Golly, he must be a looooooooooover. (laughter) He should be shot. I'd kill him if he did that to my kid!!

Then he lets his fingers do the walking.

Kinda like the Yellow Pages! (laughter)

I guess he didn't do anything with his "thang", according to Miss Rosie who went to that trial every day. And Susie begging him to stop so many times.

Probably couldn't do anything with it; that's why he needs to listen to that heavy breathing! Pant!
Pant!(laughter) What a no-count, low-down creep. I'll pay Bodding to kill him!!

Bodding says the only way Walter is coming out of jail is in a pine box.

Don't blame him myself.

Yeah, Miss Rosie said Walter's momma said at the trial that the door to Walter's room was open and there ain't no way Walter could have done that. That she is a good Christian momma and she don't put up with that.

Oh Lordy, did God strike her dead on the spot, or is she still alive??? I'd be afraid of ending up in eternal damnation for telling a story like that!

Miss Rosie said her 12-year-old nephew testified that the door was closed and his grandma told him to say it was open!!!!

Ooo! OOO! Oooo! That poor baby tells the truth? His grandma's gonna make him mis-er-a-ble!!!

And then Walter's momma tells that jury that she never allows those adult videos in her house, leastways not that she pays for them!! (lots of laughter)

I bet the judge bit on that one!! How is Walter gonna get videos except for her money? Mowing yards?
(more laughter) No, I bet he saves his pennies!! (laughter)

All these years she has covered for Walter. Guess she just couldn't cover no more.

Remember that time Walter got drunk and wrecked her car, and she said she was driving? And she was at the hospital at the time with a broken leg. And the judge asked her how she could be driving and in the hospital "simultaneously." And she said that's just how it was-simultaneously-she had never felt so excited in her life.
(laughter) Who turned Walter in?

Well, it wasn't Susie's momma. She was busy with Skeeter, her new boyfriend. I hear he's something.

Remember that one boyfriend she had? Thought he was so smart?

Speaking of smart, that Susie sure is. Her blind and all, and she won the district spelling bee for the seventh grade this year. I hear she's in National Honor Society, whatever that is.

Wonder if it's kinda like the country club. Instead of playing golf, you just spel1!!! (laughter)

Susie calls this friend of hers who tells her mother and they come and get her and take her to the police and hospital.

Some rich lady, not minding her own business, that's for sure.

Well, it was a good thing for Susie, 'cause that momma of hers sure ain't good for Susie. She don't deserve a kid like Susie. SHE oughta be the one who's blind.

Ain't that the truth. Way I see it, she already is. Just look at Skeeter!! (gales of laughter)

(The preceding was an actual court case heard in Houston, Texas, during March 1995. Italicized print indicates what came out in the trial; plain print indicates the kinds of comments that might be made by others in generational poverty.)